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ABSTRACT

A report is given on research analyzing the motivational factors manifested by gifted students, and a comparison is presented of the motivational attributes of gifted and nongifted learners. Personal attitudes examined were belongingness, positive school attitude, personal control, optimism, flexibility, and idealism. Results of this study indicated that motivation differs between gifted and nongifted learners. Suggestions are made for increased and systematic research of several variables that affect gifted learners' motivation. (JD)

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# A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE MOTIVATIONAL ATTRIBUTES OF GIFTED AND NON-GIFTED LEARNERS

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PROBLEM

Allport (1955), Combs and Snygg (1959), and Maslow (1954), among others, supply a vast literature documenting the importance of motivation in human behavior. Athey (1976), Carter (1964), Frymier (1970), and Ryan (1978) provide a like body of literature documenting the relationship between motivation and success in school-like activities. Frymier (1979) states that motivation gives both direction and intensity to human behavior. He further asserts that motivation to learn gives direction and intensity to human behavior in educational context, and motivation to learn in school gives direction and intensity to students' behavior in a school situation.

Motivation appears to be a factor rarely questioned as a variable affecting learning in a school setting. Motivational research related to the gifted learner in a school situation has evolved around the relationship between motivation and underachievement. This research by Barrett

(1957) and Gowan (1955, 1957, and 1960), among others deals with interest persay and generalizes to include statements about motivation. Virtually no research analyzes motivational factors manifested by gifted learners.

Research related to the teaching of the gifted child leaves gaps in both the understanding of the gifted child and the instructional strategies used to meet their needs. Because of the substantial agreement of the power of motivation as well as the general failure to investigate motivation as it relates to gifted learners, motivation was analyzed in this study.

PURPOSE

The present investigation (1) Analyzed the motivational factors manifested by gifted students (i.e., belongingness-alienation, positive attitude-negative school attitude, personal control-fatalism, optimism-pessimism, flexibility-dogmatism, and idealism-pragmatism),

(2) Compares the motivational attributes of gifted and non-gifted learners.

INSTRUMENT

The Junior Index of Motivation (JIM Scale) was selected as the standard instrument for measuring and analyzing subjects' level of motivation. The JIM Scale is a standard instrument that places a subject's converted motivation score on a continuum from high to low. The JIM Scale also allows the subject's motivation to be analyzed using a weighted scale. The Scale was developed from a study of hundreds of adolescent's responses to particular items in a testing situation. The scale includes 80 items, only 50 of which are scored. Time is not a factor. Correlations of JIM Scale scores with other measures of academic motivation are reported to be high (Frymier, 1970). Further, in both test-retest and split-half analyses, the Scale's reliability is reported to be as high as $r=.83$ (Frymier, 1970). The scale

consists of six motivaitonal factors: positive-negative school attitude, belongingness-alienation, idealism-pragmatism, personal control-fatalism, optimism, pessimism, and flexibility-dogmatism.

DATA SOURCE

The study sample included 45 middle and junior high school students (grades 6-9) randomly selected from public schools in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Twenty-one subjects were identified as gifted and 24 as non-gifted. Classification was based on individual I.Q. scores (in excess of 130), ratings from classroom teachers and school counselors, and scores on standard achievement tests.

RESULTS

Results reported in this study are preliminary in nature. That is, empirical data analysis is only in its initial stage. Current analysis is limited to a T-test comparing means of unrelated samples.

The mean score on the JIM Scale for non-gifted learners was 112.674, and the standard deviation was 13.062. The mean score on the JIM Scale for gifted learners was 71.319 and the standard deviation was 7.814. These results are shown in Table One.

TABLE ONE

Mean and Standard Deviation by Group

| Level | N | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Non-Gifted | 24 | 112.674 | 13.062 |
| Gifted | 21 | 71.319 | 7.814 |

A T-test comparing the means for both samples showed a significant difference between groups. The t-value of 10.739 was significant at the .001 level.

The results of this study clearly indicate that non-gifted learners more closely mirror the standardization samplings of the JIM Scale than do gifted learners. To more clearly understand

the implications of this research item and/or factor analysis is necessary.

Initial analysis of learner responses to various items by motivational factor are listed for purposes of discussion in Table Two. No data analysis has yet been completed.

TABLE TWO

Converted Mean Scores by Motivational Factors

| Factor | | Non-Gifted | Gifted |
|---|---|---|---|
| Belongingness | (32) | 16.0126 | 24.1620 |
| Positive School Attitude | (32) | 25.6798 | 12.979 |
| Personal Control | (32) | 27.7760 | 18.1273 |
| Optimism | (32) | 19.9711 | 17.8133 |
| Flexibility | (32) | 21.0023 | 12.7163 |
| Idealism | (32) | 15.0166 | 29.1619 |

DISCUSSION

This study sought to compare motivational factors between gifted and non-gifted learners.

Results of this study indicate that motivation does indeed differ between gifted and non-gifted learners. This significant difference calls for further research into the variables causing this variation.

Results of this research indicate a number of directions toward which further inquiry might be directed. The following are some problems appearing to merit additional research.

Since this is one of the very few studies focusing on motivation and gifted learners, this investigation should be extended (further analysis of specific factors) and replicated. Close attention should be given to the identification of specific motivational factors demonstrated by gifted learners who experience success in school-like activities and those who are classified as underachievers.

This research should be viewed principally as an initial foray into a vastly ignored

territory. Specifically, it points toward the need for increased and systematic research of several variables that affect gifted learners' motivation.

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